

Southwest Border Regional Commission would invest in economic development and infrastructure in all 20 counties of the 23rd Congressional District from Bexar to El Paso

(Washington, D.C.) - Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez (TX-23) applauded passage of H.R. 3246, the Regional Economic and Infrastructure Act of 2007, to establish a Southwest Border Regional Commission that would assist communities across the Southwest-Mexico border, including the entire 23rd Congressional District. The bill passed today by a vote of 264-154.

“From San Antonio to El Paso, the establishment of a Southwest Border Regional Commission will bring economic development directly to the border with focused, strategic planning for border infrastructure and community investment,” said Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez. “I have worked closely with other Southwest Members to champion this regional program. So many communities along the border lack the most basic infrastructure including sewers, roads and health care -- this Commission will harness resources from local, state, and federal levels to alleviate this disparities and set hundreds of small, rural border communities on the fast track to becoming self sustaining and thriving economically.”

The Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development Act will establish new Federal agencies, including the Southwest Border Regional Commission, charged with spurring economic development along the border, providing grants for infrastructure investment, and facilitating regional planning with local, state, and federal partnerships, among other regional development objectives. The bill authorizes five total Regional Commissions, based on the successful Appalachia Regional Commission - <http://arc.gov>. The Southwest Border Regional Commission will assist counties within 150 miles of the Texas-Mexico border, including all counties in the 23rd Congressional District.

The full text of Congressman Rodriguez's statement in support of H.R. 3246 today is posted below. The bill was supported by the bipartisan San Antonio delegation and passed the House of Representatives today; it now goes to the Senate for consideration.

Congressman Rodriguez is a Member of the House Committee on Appropriations.

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Mr. Speaker,

I rise today in strong support of H.R. 3246, the Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development Act of 2007.

This bill provides the opportunity for many communities along the border to receive the assistance and resources they have long needed in order for them to develop their infrastructure and economic prospects.

Mr. Speaker, I represent an expansive district spanning from El Paso County in far west Texas, to Dimmitt County about 550 miles south and to South San Antonio about 150 miles west. This district encompasses the longest stretch of US-Mexico border of any district in the United States.

These communities along the border lack some of the most basic infrastructure including sewers, roads and health care. These mostly rural communities along the border are often too poor to take advantage of government grants and loan programs. These cities, towns and counties don't have the revenue to provide local matching funds to qualify for federal grants and programs or have the tax base to build million-dollar waste water plants on their own.

A regional economic development commission on the southwest border, I believe will put the hundreds of small, rural border communities on the fast track to becoming self sustaining and developing economically.

Mr. Speaker, a Southwest Border Regional Commission would essentially bring the federal government to the border. This bill will not raise taxes, will not create duplicative programs and certainly not provide any services to illegal or undocumented immigrants; this bill instead provides opportunity for our communities that are most in need.

I strongly urge my colleagues to pass this bipartisan bill.